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X.—THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENTIA OF POETRY AND PROSE.

It is my purpose in this paper to consider the relations of the two great types of literary expression, poetry and prose, and, if possible, to determine the most vital, fundamental, and essential trait which discriminates one type from the other, more particularly in the primitive stages of their development.

In this investigation certain postulates regarding the nature of literature and of art will be of service in clearing the ground. I shall make four such assumptions, as follows :

First, the difference between these two literary types is a fundamental, not a superficial difference. In the words of Professor Earle, "the distinction between poetry and prose is one which is seated in the nature of things . . . it is a profound and essential organic distinction."¹

Second, all literature, whether poetry or prose, is included in the circle of the arts. Literature, I mean, is cognate with architecture, sculpture, painting, and music. It is evolved from the same general sources, observes the same general laws, and manifests the same general characteristics. It differs from the other arts only in the character of its medium and the extent to which it is used.

Third, art is the outcome of an attempt to express and to convey to others an idea, feeling, or experience. Every such attempt, however naïve or commonplace, in as far as it succeeds results in a work of art. But it does not necessarily result in a great work of art, for the value of any

¹ Earle, *English Prose*, p. 151.

work is dependent upon the skill of the artist, the nature of the medium, the intrinsic worth of the idea embodied, and a variety of other factors more or less obscure.

Fourth, every art process on its first appearance was what the scientists call a utility accommodation. That is, it originated in some act which was at the time useful in preserving the life of man or in maintaining his social integrity.

Bearing these assumptions in mind, let us now consider some of the proposed differentia of prose and poetry. Certain of these relate to the content, one, at least, to the form. I will consider first those relating to the content.

1. But little inquiry is needed to discover that most of the marks of difference suggested by writers on poetry are general qualities characteristic of all the arts indifferently. Imagination is such a differentia. We are told that poetry is the organ of imagination, prose the organ of reason. But it requires no profound acquaintance with principles of art to detect the falsity of this distinction. Poets make use of imagination, no doubt; but so do workers in every other art. Imagination is indispensable alike in architecture, sculpture, music, painting, and literature. It appears in prose as well as in poetry. It may, it is true, shine out more brilliantly in some poetry than in some prose, but the contrary may also be true. Burke's prose, for example, is more truly imaginative than Pope's poetry.

2. Emotion has often been set up as a distinguishing mark. But this again is common to all art, and the test breaks down utterly when applied to specific cases. Thus one would hesitate to affirm that Lamb's essays are lacking in emotion. Wordsworth's *Excursion* pales its uneffectual fire in the presence of Carlyle's *French Revolution*. Ruskin's *Modern Painters* shows more heat than all of Landor's verse. Even taking English prose in bulk and

setting it over against English verse in bulk, it is not so easy as one might think — especially when one comes to the novelists — to say which of the two displays more joy, more wrath, more passion.

3. Distinguishing marks based upon the degree of some artistic quality manifested in the work, such, for example, as insight into man or nature, nobility of emotion, grade of pleasure aroused in the hearer, elevation of subject-matter, creative power of the writer, and so on, — these require no extended discussion. It is obvious that they are tests of the relative values of different specimens of art, not means of distinguishing one type of literature from another type. Sculpture, painting, prose, poetry, — any one of these may display greater or less insight into nature and human nature, may be moderately or greatly noble in its content, may give much or little pleasure. We cannot in this way differentiate poetry from prose, for prose is not undeveloped poetry, but diverse. It is true that some poetry may in degree of emotion, imagination, or creative power rise far above some prose, and it may well be that in these respects the best poetry, taken in bulk, rises above the best prose, taken in bulk, that has yet been written. But as long as some prose rises in these respects above some undeniably genuine poetry, these particular traits will not serve as a differentia of poetry in general from prose in general. Nor is the case better when the test is applied to particular examples. A mode of differentiation which brings *Henry Esmond* under poetry and *Hudibras* under prose may be interesting and suggestive, but it can never meet with general acceptance.

4. If the differentia just considered be set aside as pertaining to art in general, or as indicating degrees of artistic value or artistic success rather than differences of literary type, there still remains the important difference

of form. On this subject the last word has apparently been said by Professor Gummere in his work, *The Beginnings of Poetry*. In an exhaustive chapter in which he brings together the opinions of many critics, ancient and modern, Professor Gummere attempts to show that rhythm (by which he means meter) is the essential fact of poetry. "All writers on poetry," he says, "take rhythm for granted until someone asks why it is necessary." "Poetry is rhythmic utterance, rhythmic speech, with mainly emotional origin." Here we seem to have a definite, workable differentia — one, moreover, upon which there is already consensus of opinion among the critics. Writings in meter are poetry, writings not in meter are prose — nothing could be simpler. But a more careful examination of the argument gives us pause. Meter, we learn upon further reading, is not offered as a fundamental differentia, but merely as a sign. "Nobody pretends," says Professor Gummere, "that rhythm is the soul of poetry; it is a necessary form, a necessary condition." It appears, therefore, that the aim of this chapter is not, as might be supposed, to discover the essence of poetry as poetry and to set it over against the essence of prose. The quest is merely for an invariable mark or sign by which the two types may be conveniently distinguished.

I would not question the practical usefulness of such a distinguishing mark, but it is obviously not the differentia for which I am seeking. I am not content to stop with an outward sign or symptom, with a touchstone which applied to a given piece of literature enables the critic to say, 'This is poetry,' or 'This is prose.' I wish, as I suggested in the beginning, to arrive at those fundamental causes, which, operating on the mind of man and his mode of expression, have issued on the one hand in the form of prose, on the other in the form of poetry. Having deter-

mined these primal causes, we may then, if we choose, trace from them the divergent forms which outwardly characterize the divergent types. Putting aside, then — though reluctantly — the differentia of meter, let us ask, What are these primal causes ?

Art, as I have said, is the means by which an individual expresses his thoughts, feelings and experiences (that is, himself) and communicates them to his fellow-men. If this definition be accepted, it follows that every art process has a two-fold character. On one side, it is a process of self-expression ; on the other side, it is a process of communication. Regarded from the point of view of expression, the artist is a man whose emotion and imagination continually well up within him and seek outlet. His intuitions, his reflections, the stored-up experiences of his life, his contacts with man and nature, — these, colored by his feelings, worked over in his imagination, rise in his heart and gather to his lips and cry for utterance. That is, the artist from this point of view is an expressive individuality. But on the other hand the artist is a man who yearns to communicate his feelings to his fellow-men. Haunted by the vision of a listening world, he projects himself eagerly toward his imagined audience. He hungers for communion. He desires that his thought may pass into other men and prevail. In fine, he is a communicative individuality. Furthermore, these two impulses are coincident. In the process of creation the artist is at the same moment thrilled by the impulse to self-expression and by the impulse to communication ; with the same glance he looks into his own heart and into the heart of humanity. But although every artistic process is at once expressive and communicative, the two impulses rarely balance. The emphasis in any particular case is thrown upon one side or the other. The art-product is predomi-

nantly expressive or it is predominantly communicative. Present in all grades of artistic production this two-fold aspect is more easily observable in primitive life, to which we must recur for the genesis of all aesthetic phenomena. In the life of primitive man two distinct types of social situation continually arise. One is that in which the need is primarily for self-expression; the other is that in which the need is primarily for communication. It is not difficult to find examples. Let us consider first the genesis of communication. In the struggle for existence between rival clans a typical situation is that in which a fighting man on one side, having been cut off from his fellows, is in imminent peril of his life. In this emergency the fighter's greatest need is to convey to his clansmen in the briefest and most effective way the fact of his embarrassment. He shouts for help. In doing so he no doubt expresses himself; feelings rise within him and clamor for utterance; but his interest is obviously less in self-expression than in instant communication. The chief propulsive power back of his utterance is the imperative need of conveyance. He wants to transmit to other persons knowledges and feelings which now they do not possess.¹

¹ According to Hirn, *Origins of Art*, p. 184, communication is itself essentially non-æsthetic, although it has called into existence some important æsthetic qualities, such as exactness, explicitness, reserve, etc. This position is, I think, untenable. It has arisen from Hirn's taking too restricted a view of the nature and content of communication — "the purely intellectual motive of conveying with the greatest possible clearness a thought-content," he calls it, as if in its earliest stages communication took the form of business letters. Primitive communication, for aught I can see, may be as little intellectual as primitive expression. The content to be conveyed may be hate, love, despair, reverence, or any other state of feeling, as well as facts or inferences; and the motive, as in the cry for help, may be as emotional as the motive of a lyric.

The second typical situation is that in which the primary need is for self-expression. In the early history of mankind this need is doubtless most keenly felt on festal occasions. I will take by way of illustration Ehrenreich's description of the Botocudos quoted by Professor Gummere:¹ "On festal occasions the whole horde meets by night round the camp fire for a dance. Men and women alternating . . . form a circle: each dancer lays his arms about the necks of his two neighbours, and the entire ring begins to turn to the right or to the left, while all the dancers stamp strongly and in rhythm the foot that is advanced, and drag after it the other foot. Now with drooping heads they press closer and closer together; now they widen the circle. Throughout the dance resounds a monotonous song to the time of which they stamp their feet." Here there is small need of communication, for there is next to nothing to communicate. Each person knows and feels what every other person knows and feels. Every man is at once audience and performer. The sense of communication is absorbed in the lust of expression.

It is obvious that these two situations present striking psychological differences. In the first the imagination of the speaker is busy with his audience. He hungers for publication. He yearns to see the impact of his utterance on his hearers. He drags up expression by the roots, as it were, in order to hurl it at the heads of his fellow-clansmen. His chief satisfaction comes from their response to his cry.

In the second situation the satisfaction comes from the relief of surcharged feelings. That the utterance goes out to fellow-beings is felt, to be sure, but the objective point of the utterance is felt less keenly, less pungently,

¹ *Beginnings of Poetry*, p. 95.

less piquantly than the release of the tension. The impulse to self-expression at its height may be likened to Robinson Crusoe's desire to exhale his breath when he was buried in the body of the wave. "I was ready to burst," he says, "with holding my breath when, as I felt myself rising, so to my immediate relief I found my head and hands shoot above the surface of the water." Robinson Crusoe was not at that moment concerned about the objective point of his exhalation. The products of respiration might go wherever they liked; nature would take care of them. What he wanted was relief.

Since the two situations are markedly different and since the organism always adjusts its modes of action to the situation, it is to be assumed that in the products of man's æsthetic activity there will be a corresponding line of demarkation. One species of æsthetic products will be the outcome of the expressive frame of mind, another will be the outcome of the communicative frame of mind.

These differences may be embodied in a formula. To the utterance which springs from the first situation we may apply the term *expression for communication's sake*. To that which springs from the second we may apply the term *communication for expression's sake*.

To illustrate this distinction once more and under another figure, primitive man in the act of utterance may be compared to a bowman on the point of shooting an arrow at a mark. The bowman is interested both in the release of the arrow and in its objective point, that is, the target. But the center of greatest interest may conceivably be either. In terms of the formula, communication for expression's sake is the twang of the bow-string; expression for communication's sake is the 'chug' of the arrow as it buries itself in the target.

That such bifurcation does actually exist in the arts

other than literature has been demonstrated by John Stuart Mill,¹ and the point need not therefore be argued at length. I will, however, give a few illustrations of my own.

In architecture the Pyramids seem to have been erected mainly for the purpose of communicating to posterity certain egotistic ideas of the Egyptian monarchs ; the Parthenon, for the purpose of bringing to expression the ideals of its creator.

Music, though it is mainly expressive, is not infrequently used for purposes of communication. Bugle calls, drum-taps for marching, and the like, are used primarily not to express the ideas of the bugler or the drummer, but to convey information to the listener. The Leitmotifs of the Wagnerian operas when first announced are mainly for the purpose of communication. They bear a curious resemblance to bugle calls. An example of music wrested from its usual purposes and diverted to communication is found in the following passage from Scott's *Redgauntlet* :² " His profession furnished me with some hope that this desired communication might be attained, since it is well known that in Scotland, where there is so much national music, the words and airs of which are generally known, there is a kind of free-masonry amongst performers, by which they can, by the mere choice of a tune, express a great deal to the hearers. Personal allusions are often made in this manner, with much point and pleasantry ; and nothing is more usual at public festivals, than that the air played to accompany a particular health or toast, is made the vehicle of compliment, spirit, and sometimes of satire."

In the field of painting we may discover the communicative impulse not only in picture-writing, message-sticks,

¹ *Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties.*

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and other primitive modes of conveying thought, but also in those modern pictures whose primary purpose is to tell a story. Such pictures, although condemned by some writers on art, have been popular in all ages, and probably will continue to be. Over against them and at the other extreme may be set paintings like those of Whistler, which aim to express the artist's moods and impressions.

What is true of the arts of architecture, music, and painting, is also true of the art with which we are here mainly concerned, namely, the art of speech. It should first be pointed out, however, that all forms of vocal utterance, and all forms of gesture, both in animals and man, are alike in one respect. I mean that for physiological and psychological reasons all vocal utterances are rhythmical. The dog barks, the cat caterwauls, the infant cries, the man speaks, in a rhythmical series of sounds. All gestures are rhythmical. The animal organism in a normal state cannot express itself otherwise. For this reason the main part of our inquiry consists in determining in what respect the natural rhythmical movements of gesture and of vocal utterance are modified by the shifting of emphasis from the side of expression to the side of communication.

Beginning low down in the scale, we may notice, as corroborative evidence, that the cries of animals possess a different quality according as they are predominantly expressive or predominantly communicative. I give the following examples at the risk of smiles and gibes; but those who are familiar with the researches of Darwin, Groos and others concerning the genesis of expressive signs, will, I am sure, appreciate the importance of this kind of data.

The cat, when it is in an expressive mood, purrs, but instantly changes its utterance to a cry or series of cries when it desires to attract the attention of man.

The voice of certain birds, as the cat-bird, for example, differs according to the mood. When the cat-bird is alone and communing with itself, it pours out its notes in a series of regular rhythms. When, on the other hand, being disturbed, it wishes to communicate its feelings to man or to its young, it utters harsh, strident cries arranged in a series of a less regular kind.¹

The domestic cow, if we may trust the sympathetic observations of Mr. John Burroughs, varies its utterance to meet the varying needs of the social situation. The voice of the cow has four tones, or lows. Three of these are communications, namely, the alarmed or distressed low of affection when her calf is taken away, the call of hunger, and the frenzied bawl to her kin on smelling blood — the cry of the clan. But the fourth tone is different. It is “a long sonorous volley expressive of a kind of unrest, a vague longing.”

I draw a fourth instance from my own observation. A kitten, by falling from the furnace pipes to the cellar floor of my house, injured itself severely. As long as it was alone its cries were regular; it emitted a kind of groan with each expiration of its breath. But when it heard me enter the cellar it changed the character of its cry. It raised the pitch of the tones and gave the cries with increasing rapidity, intensity, and insistence. This characteristic of its utterance persisted for some seconds, or until I spoke to it, when the cries became again more regular and fainter. I infer that while the animal was merely expressing itself, giving its feelings vent, it cried in a rhythmical (one might almost say a metrical) series. When it passed to a communicative mood, its cries became cumulative.

¹ I have observed a pet canary interrupt its song when it was spoken to, give a little chirp of acknowledgment in a quite different key and modulation, then resume its singing.

Turning from animals to man, we may begin with an example of gesture. A country schoolmaster sitting in his chair absorbed in thought unconsciously begins drumming with his fingers on the desk. Since by the finger-movement he is expressing himself, not consciously communicating his mood to others, the drumming takes the form of a tattoo. But now change the conditions somewhat. Suppose, while he is thus expressing himself, that he hears a snicker from the back of the room. Instantly the character of the tapping will be transformed. The teacher will now apply his knuckles to the desk in a cumulative series of smart raps. His mental attitude has changed. At first, when he was in an expressive mood, his finger-movements were made for the sake of giving his feelings vent. But now he is in a communicative mood, and the rapping on the desk is intended to convey his feelings to his pupils.

The duration of the gesture in each case deserves attention. In the first situation the tattoo will continue until the mood changes, varying in tempo and character with the rise and fall of the emotional wave. In the second, the rapping will be kept up with increasing intensity and rapidity until it is checked by the response of the hearers.¹

The cry of an infant when it is merely expressing its

¹The same differences may be noted in signs of applause, which are, of course, at once expressions of the pleasure of the audience and communications to the performers. When an audience is genuinely delighted and breaks out into a spontaneous clapping of hands, the successive strokes are at fairly regular intervals. This is especially true of persons who, absorbed in pleasing recollections of the performance, applaud abstractedly and as if in a dream. On the other hand, when the hand-clapping is mainly communicative for example when the performance is late in beginning and the audience is impatient, or when the applause is merely notice to a singer that he is to come back and repeat his song, the successive strokes tend to increase in energy and the tempo to accelerate.

feelings is markedly different from its cry when it is trying to attract the attention of the nurse. In the first case the sounds are uttered at regular intervals with rhythmical crescendoes and diminuendoes as its pain or fear increases and diminishes. In the second case the child is apt to cry loudly and, so to speak, pointedly for a few seconds and then to pause an instant for a response. This peculiarity gives to the series a cumulative movement.

A child of four or five who has just received some joyful piece of news will express himself in repetitious and rhythmical ways by such expressions as "goody, goody, goody!" or "whoopity, whoopity, whoopity!" But to summon one of his boy friends to share his enjoyment he will call in a rhythm of a different kind, such as "oh-eé-o," or "whoo-ee" breaking off as soon as he hears a response.

The examples which I have now given have not only shown that a difference exists between expressive and communicative utterance, they have also disclosed the way in which this difference reacts upon the character of the rhythm. Communicative utterance, as we have seen, arises, as in the cry for help, from the urgent necessities of a practical situation. It adapts itself to these necessities. It moves right onward until it accomplishes its object, which is to convey ideas or feelings to an auditor. Its rhythm is determined by the auditor's response. If response is delayed, the pitch rises, the utterance becomes more vehement, the cries more frequent. If response is prompt, the utterance is checked, or falls off in rapidity and force. We may say therefore that the earliest communicative utterance was characterized by two main features: (1) It had a swaying, fluctuating movement of a seemingly irregular kind; (2) it displayed cumulative intensity or climax, conjoined with diminishing intensity or cadence. These, I need hardly say, are the character-

istics of prose in all languages. On the other hand, in the expressive type of speech the individual is busy primarily with his own thoughts and feelings. His mind is self-centered. There is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings of which Wordsworth speaks. Under such circumstances it is possible for the rhythm to be shaped by purely physiological or psychological causes. Thus expressive utterance falls naturally into a fairly regular series subject to changes in tempo and pitch corresponding to the successive moods of the speaker. But, as I have said, in the early life of man the emotional upheaval usually took place as a festal and communal fact. The expressive impulse in primitive times was at its height when men were singing and dancing in unison. The expressive form of speech was thus mainly shaped by the necessity laid upon the social group of acting as a unit, of taking the forward step and the backward step in time with the rest, of shouting in concert as the foot descended. To quote from Professor Gummere: "It is clear that movements of labor, particularly in a reminiscent festal act, and movements of the communal dance, furnished the raw material of poetry. In all cases the primitive dance, or what seems to come nearest to that state of the art, is a dance of masses of men for one purpose and to one exact rhythm. Equal sets of movements gave the verse, and sets of these sets gave in time the strophe. Communal interest, resulting in the communal expression, added contents to form; and shout, movement, cadence, are all born of this absolutely social and communal impulse." The chief characteristic of expressive utterance is then this — that it consists of brief units of approximately equal length so arranged as to constitute a regular rhythmical series. This is the chief formal characteristic of poetry in all languages.

But even if this be the true differentia of prose and poetry, in their primitive stages, the question may be raised whether the modern types, so much richer in content, so much more complex in structure, can be thus discriminated. No doubt there is great risk in attempting to pass by means of a formula from the earlier literature to the later. Nevertheless, since the literature of our time, no matter how complex, is no more than the gradual development of the humblest and most naïve forms of speech, it ought to be possible to cross the gulf in safety. It ought to be possible, that is, on the one hand to give any piece of poetry a prosaic cast simply by throwing the emphasis upon the communicative phase, and on the other hand to give any piece of prose a poetic cast simply by throwing the emphasis upon expression. The hypothesis is easily tested. Let us attempt first the conversion of poetry into prose. The song from Tennyson's *Maud* will serve as a *corpus vile*. If we speak the lines, "Come into the garden, Maud, For the black bat, night, hath flown," in the mood of one who, while he addresses his mistress, is giving his surcharged heart relief, we shall fall into the usual poetical modulation. The words are a lyric cry addressed — does one care to whom? They are for Maud, for us, for anyone. They are the utterance of youth and passion, that is the all-important thing.¹

¹ If verse is the natural language of communication for expression's sake, what shall be said about diaries? Why are not all diaries written in poetry? With reference to some diaries the answer is obvious. The *Diary* of Marie Bashkirtseff, for example, was written for publication. It is as communicative as a leader in the *London Times*. But Pepys' *Diary*? That was surely written for himself alone. No doubt; but that is just the reason why it is in prose. It was a communication to himself. A reviewer writing in the *New York Nation* some months ago, called attention to the pang with which Pepys makes note of his growing blindness and suggests that his regret was due less to the blindness itself than to the reflection that he would no longer be able to read

But now shift the mood imaginatively. Let the lines be spoken by one who is mainly concerned in conveying his thought to another. So spoken, the lines inevitably gravitate to the prosaic. It is difficult to keep one's face straight while one says them because of the incongruity between the old poetic associations of the lines and the new prosaic mold into which they are compelled.¹

to himself the record of his amours. In other words, Pepys' interest in writing his diary was not that of one who is giving vent to irrepressible feelings, but of one who is holding communication with his most intimate acquaintance.

¹The poets themselves have in general taken kindly to this theory of their poetic mood. Thus Walt Whitman says "Give me to warble spontaneous songs recluse by myself, for my own ears only." Tennyson's lines have often been quoted:

"I do but sing because I must
And pipe but as the linnets sing."

Says Mrs. Browning in *Aurora Leigh*:

"And whosoever writes good poetry,
Looks just to art. He does not write for you
Or me,—for London or for Edinburgh;
He will not suffer the best critic known
To step into his sunshine of free thought
And self-absorbed conception and exact
An inch-long swerving of the holy lines

.
What the poet writes,

"He writes; mankind accepts it if it suits."

More valuable as testimony is the following from Shelley's *Defense of Poetry*: "A poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why."

It is important to note, however, that expression, although it is the dominating influence in the poetic process, is not the only one. Poetry is not expression for expression's sake; communication always plays some part in it. How delicately these two forces must in the act of creation be adjusted one to the other in the poet's mind is thus indicated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti:

"Above all ideal personalities with which the poet must learn to identify himself, there is one supremely real which is the most impera-

To illustrate the conversion of prose into poetry is not so easy, but I will attempt it. Take the examples cited by Professor Gummere in the *Beginnings of Poetry*, p. 59. The first is a passage from Carlyle on the murdered Princess De Lamballe: "She was beautiful; she was good; she had known no happiness." This, says Professor Gummere, is prose because its cadence falls naturally into the sweep of Carlyle's prose, that is, it is not part of a rhythmic whole. The second example, to be compared with it, is from Webster's Duchess of Malfi: "Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle; she died young." This is poetry, we are told, because its rhythm is part of the larger rhythm of the drama. The distinction is just, but has Professor Gummere seized upon the essential, underlying, causal differentia — the ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως? Is there not behind the rhythm in each case (for both passages are rhythmical) some compelling force? Is there not a mood which would go far to melt the sentences of Carlyle and make them flow, or at least tend to flow, into the rhythm of Webster's? They are now Carlyle's communication to us. He is in a communicative mood; he wants to hear the impact of these words upon our minds. But conceive him in an expressive mood, the heart full, the thought crying for utterance, conveyance diminished to a sense of kinship and sympathy with the race. It is not difficult to think of the words as shaping themselves into poetical forms under the influence of such a mood.¹

tive of all; namely, that of his reader. And the practical watchfulness needed for such assimilation is as much a gift and instinct as is the creative grasp of alien character. It is a spiritual contact hardly conscious yet ever renewed, and which must be a part of the very act of production." (Quoted in William Sharp's *Rossetti*, p. 406.)

¹In prose-poetry the words do, as it were, melt and tend to flow into poetic forms. Prose-poetry results when a writer adhering to the traditional medium of communication — the forms invested by long use

I will add some miscellaneous applications of this differentia:

A considerable part of Wordsworth's verse, particularly of the *Prelude* and the *Excursion*, appears to have been written while Wordsworth was in a communicative mood. Consequently, although he employs the traditional versification and at times evinces great imagination and noble feeling, the lines remain hopelessly prosaic.¹

The difference between Shakespeare and Verulam is that Shakespeare's genius is essentially an expressive genius, concerned only secondarily with the demands of communication; whereas Lord Bacon's genius is essentially a communicative genius, concerned primarily with modes of transmission and fearful lest the modern tongues shall play the bankrupt with its intellectual wares. The impulse to expression in Shakespeare, so eager, so intense, so individual, must have been in Bacon what the psychologists call a massive feeling—a vague desire without a definite locus in his mind, a general quality of his mental organism. Shakespeare, fairly stifled in the midst of his

with communicative associations—becomes interested mainly in expression. Under the influence of the expressive impulse the words tend to fall into regular rhythms, but are prevented from doing so by the writer's sense of integrity—his sense of the artistic necessity of maintaining the structural form with which he set out. If his sense of stylistic integrity is weak, he is apt, like Dickens and Ingersoll, to lapse into bad blank verse.

¹ Anyone who has written verse—such verse as it was given to him to write—knows how fatal to the versifying mood it is to let the mind wander to anticipated readers, and busy itself with their hypothetical needs and desires. The words congeal and the line grows ponderous. In writing prose, however, the case is just the opposite. Many skilful prosaists owe their success to the fact that they address themselves habitually, as they write, to an imaginary hearer or reader. For some interesting data on this point see Bainton's *Art of Authorship*, and compare the passage on Thackeray in Saintsbury's *Short History of English Literature*, p. 746.

pent-up feelings, we can imagine as throwing wide the door of expression, caring little who was outside so long as someone was there. Bacon we must think of as peering through a convenient loophole, surveying the faces of the throng, and pondering the probable effect of his utterance upon men's minds and distant ages.

The Bible, since it is in prose, has throughout for most modern readers the force of a communication. It is a message. By its very form it seems not so much the utterance of a divine being as a communication to mankind. But to the ancient Hebrews a considerable part of it must have had a different aspect. The poetical books were primarily expressions of the deity, or of individuals; they were only secondarily messages to man. By using the Modern Readers' Bible, in which the poetical books are arranged in the form of poetry, one may realize in some degree this change of emphasis.

My conclusion is then that the difference between poetry and prose has its root in the difference between two great and ever-recurring social situations, — first, the situation in which a member of society is moved to verbal utterance mainly by a desire to communicate himself to his fellow men, the desire for expression being present but subordinate; second, the situation in which one man, or a number of men acting in concert, are moved by a desire to express or give vent to the feelings and ideas which arise in them, the desire being the natural psychological necessity that thought and feeling in simple natures must have some motor outlet. The character of the situation in each case colors the quality of the utterance, gives to it a peculiar tone, or tang, or atmosphere, whatever form it may take. But the form also of the expression has been determined by the situation out of which the expression flowed. The situation which is toned communicatively

gives rise to a form of utterance in which, to use the language of Professor Budde, "the current of speech flows consistently as far as the thought carries it," or until there is some response of comprehension on the part of the listener. The situation which is toned expressively gives rise to a form of utterance in which the store of thought is divided into relatively brief units, the arrangement of which is determined by the ebb and flow of individual feeling or by the consent of the throng. To recur to my formula, poetry is communication in language for expression's sake; prose is expression in language for communication's sake.

It remains for me to acknowledge my indebtedness to a distinguished authority. I refer to John Stuart Mill. From Mill's essay entitled "Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties" I have derived two main ideas: first, I have taken bodily the idea that the distinction between poetry and prose is common to all the arts; second, Mill's statement that "eloquence is heard; poetry is overheard," suggested to me the idea that poetry is expressive, prose communicative. My interpretation of these ideas is, however, so different from that of Mill that it may, I hope, still make some claim to originality.

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